

# Oklahoma Conservation Partnership Report

January 2014

**VISION: Productive Lands Healthy Environments -- MISSION: Helping People Help the Land**

## Geologic Support Provided to NRCS New York – Little Choconut Site 2C, Broome County

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Geologic support was provided to NRCS New York. Gregg Hudson, Geologist in the NRCS State Office in Stillwater, provided four weeks of logging and sampling on Little Choconut Site 2C just north of the Binghamton area in Broome County. Daniel Vellone, Geologist out of the Massachusetts State Office, who provides the primary support to New York, requested Mr. Hudson's services which began on November 25<sup>th</sup> and culminated on December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2013. NRCS Geologists belong to the Geologic Services Unit (GSU) and can provide service outside of their assigned State(s) in order to complete critical needs projects. The drilling on Little Choconut Site 2C was the final site of three drilled under this investigation contract, with Sites 2A & 2B being the first two completed in this watershed. Two drill rigs were operating at each site. Joining Mr. Hudson during his tenure on site was Bryan Moffatt from the Texas State Office (December 2 – 13) and Mr. Vellone the final week. Also providing assistance during his time on site was Ryan Pasternak, Earth Team Volunteer, out of the Binghamton Field Office. Ryan assisted Mr. Hudson in collecting samples upstream of the structure on November 29, and assisted throughout the four weeks during the drilling. SJB Drilling Services out of Buffalo performed the drilling. Brothers Brian and Daniel Delude operated the rig Mr. Hudson was assigned to.



Gregg Hudson, Oklahoma NRCS Geologist, standing atop the dam at Little Choconut Site 2C, New York



Rig set up at TH 703 near the outlet of the principal spillway

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## ENGINEERING REVIEW

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### **Craig Spencer named 2013 Engineer of the Year**

Craig Spencer, Agricultural Engineer at the McAlester Technical Service Office (TSO) was the recipient of the 5th annual “Engineer of the Year” award. The State Office Engineering Staff voted to give Craig this award, open to any engineer on a TSO staff, based on their overall performance for FY2013. Craig received a keepsake marble paper weight during the Joint TSO/State Office Technical Meeting held in January. In addition, a plaque located outside of the State Conservation Engineer’s office will list Craig’s name and the names of all recipients. Congratulations to Craig for an award well deserved.



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Craig Spencer was presented with the 2013 Engineer of the Year award by Chris Stoner, State Conservation Engineer (center) and Gary O’Neill, State Conservationist (right)

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### **Tracy R. Potter, State Office, Retires after 35 Years of Service**

Tracy R. Potter, Civil Engineering Technician, State Office, retired after 35 years of service. Tracy started his career with the Bureau of Reclamation in Amarillo, Texas in 1979 and completed with the Natural Resource Conservation Service, Oklahoma, January 3, 2014. Tracy is an avid Dallas Cowboys fan and outdoors person. Tracy was presented with a length of service plaque and a spot award for his professional conduct and integrity as a Civil Engineering Technician serving the state of Oklahoma.



## OUTREACH REVIEW

### USDA holds Programs and Eligibility Workshops for Agriculture Producers

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) partnered with the Oklahoma Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (OTCAC) and the Cherokee Nation to hold a “hands on” workshop that covered the eligibility and application process for USDA Farm Bill programs for Tribes, tribal members, women in agriculture and producers. The workshop was held on January 21, 2014 at the Cherokee Nation Tribal Headquarters.

USDA agencies participating in the workshop included NRCS, Farm Service Agency (FSA), Rural Development (RD) and Risk Management Agency (RMA). The focus of the workshops was to provide the opportunity for agriculture producers to receive “hands on” assistance in completing Farm Bill applications and receive the training on what forms need to be completed in order for the producer to be eligible for USDA programs. NRCS and FSA staff provided assistance in completing Farm Bill application and eligibility forms. RD and RMA provided valuable information and training on their community and individual program opportunities. In addition, all USDA agencies provided program information packets to all workshop attendees.

Facilitating the workshop was Dr. Carol Crouch, NRCS State Tribal Liaison and NRCS National American Indian AI/AN Special Emphasis Program Manager (SEPM), with a welcome provided by Chad Kacir, ASTC-FO, representing NRCS state leadership. NRCS staff providing technical assistance during the workshop were: Matt Ward, Program Liaison; District Conservationists, Lisel Worley, Michael Ramming and Audra Fenton; NRCS State AI/AN SEPM, Cody Parker and Soil Conservationist, Clint Fleharty. Representing other USDA agencies included; Jerry Efurd, Director of Community Programs and Brian Wiles, Business & Energy Program Director, for RD; Steve Molloy, Farm Loan Programs and Jerry Starkey, Farm Programs, for FSA and LaShaun Smith for RMA. Lunch was provided for all attendees at the Cherokee Nation Natural Resources department in the Cherokee Nation *Restaurant of the Cherokees*.

Attending the workshops were 17 Oklahoma Tribes, 41 tribal members, 9 women in agriculture and 7 beginning farmers.



**Matt Ward, NRCS Program Liaison, provided “hands on” training for producers on completing applications for Farm Bill programs**

### Workforce Diversity Civil Rights Award

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation National Workforce Diversity award recognizes individuals who have made the most significant contributions to work force diversity in NRCS. Nominations reflect exceptional accomplishments that achieved quantifiable results towards NRCS’s goal of building a diverse workforce to ensure that programs are delivered in an efficient, effective and fair manner. Dr. Carol Crouch, Oklahoma State Tribal Liaison, was selected by NRCS Chief Jason Weller as a recipient of this award. The letter read “You were nominated for this award because of your devotion and dedication to conservation and effectively working with the Tribal communities. You have also been instrumental as a speaker, mentor, and motivator to new recruits in the agency”.



**State Conservationist, Gary O'Neill and Carol Crouch, State Tribal Liaison**



**State Conservationist, Gary O'Neill, Carol Crouch, State Tribal Liaison and the Okla Civil Rights Committee**



## ZONE 1 REVIEW

### GRANT COUNTY – Medford Field Service Center

In November Grant County completed 7 Emergency Watershed Program projects (EWP). The Grant County Commissioners have become accustomed to partnering with NRCS to address stream bank erosion that is threatening public infrastructure. Below are a few before and after pictures of the Cooper Creek project located in northwest Grant County. Those assisting in the projects were Dan Smith, Resource Engineer; Meredith Shiflet, Agriculture Engineer; Larry Frey, Civil Engineering Technician; and Robert Cambron, Construction Inspector.



### MAJOR COUNTY – Fairview Field Service Center

The Major County Conservation District and Fairview NRCS participated in 4 outreach events in Major County along with OSU Extension over the past few months. Chis Best and Michael Roberts presented outreach information regarding available programs as well as technical assistance available to local producers and land owners. These meetings were held in Fairview (11/19/13, 12/17/13), Ames (11/21/13) and Ringwood (12/12/2013) with 107 people participating.



## **ZONE 3 REVIEW**

### **CADDO COUNTY – Anadarko Field Service Center**

Caddo County NRCS co-hosted a meeting with the Caddo County Cattleman's Association to discuss options for Prescribed Burning. The meeting was well attended by over 45 producers from Caddo and Grady County. Russell Stevens, the Noble Foundation, spoke to the group about the proper management and burning techniques. NRCS was on hand to talk about how Farm Bill programs can aid in prescribed burning. Many producers expressed interest in prescribed burning associations.

### **ROGER MILLS COUNTY – Cheyenne Field Service Center**

The Roger Mills Prescribed Burn Association (RMPBA) which includes Roger Mills and Beckham Counties held their annual meeting December 3, 2013 from 5-8 p.m. The meeting was held at the Cheyenne Volunteer Fire Department in Cheyenne, Oklahoma. The Board of Directors met first then the Annual Meeting was held. Harry Fritzler, NRCS Prescribe Burn liaison, and John Weir, OSU Prescribe Burn Professor were the guest speakers at the Annual Meeting. The meeting included membership recruitment, update on liability insurance, burn associations across Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. Oklahoma Burn Association activities were presented, and new burn videos were shown.

### **STEPHENS COUNTY – Duncan Field Service Center**



The Stephens County Conservation District and NRCS put together a Natural Resource Day which was held at Comanche Elementary School on October 30th, 2013. It was geared towards Pre-K up to Third Graders which totaled up to 350 students. There were several different stations where the students got to learn many different things related towards the field of agriculture. From making Life Bracelets to learn about the water cycle, digging for fossils to learn about cultural resources, or seeing bees to learn about their contribution to the environment, this was an all-day event that even brought on the help of the local K-9 unit for a special presentation.



## ZONE 4 REVIEW

### Wetland Reserve Program

Several WRP construction projects were completed in Zone 4 this past month. One of which in Choctaw County consisted of building a rock lined waterway that also acts as the access road for the wetland units. The original cause of erosion was due to the fine sand that composed the road. The sand was easily washed away with storm runoff and having also been used as the access road for several years, the soil could never get erosion resistant vegetation established. The designed fix was to grade the centerline of the road to a consistent grade and fill the eroded gully with the spoils. Once the new road centerline was graded, geotextile and geo-cell webbing was placed and staked down. Gravel was used to fill the geo-cell webbing to serve as the access road as well as a waterway for storm runoff. Once permanent vegetation is established in the spring, the erosion concern will be eliminated and a durable, permanent access road will be available. Design, construction oversight, and photos provided by Craig Spencer, Agricultural Engineer, McAlester Technical Service Office.

